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State Historical Society celebrating “Our South Dakota Christmas”

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota State Historical Society will be celebrating an “Our South Dakota Christmas” during its annual Holiday Open House on Friday, Nov. 25, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

There is free admission to the museum during the open house, which runs from 12-4:30 p.m. CST. The featured exhibit this year is “Our South Dakota: Big Land/Big Ideas/Big Heart.” With many hands-on activities, the exhibit creates a fun environment for learning all about South Dakota and has received rave reviews from visitors of all ages.

As part of the “Our South Dakota Christmas” theme, family heirlooms belonging to State Historical Society staff will be displayed in the lobby of the center.

“We thought displaying family heirlooms would be a good way to provide a visual image for ‘Our South Dakota Christmas and bring back memories of Christmases past,” said Patricia Miller, president of the South Dakota Heritage Fund, the State Historical Society’s nonprofit financial partner, and one of the event organizers.

Also in the lobby is a display of small Christmas trees recalling South Dakota’s heritage of hunting. Mallard, grouse, turkey and pheasant feathers are incorporated. The display also incorporates elk and buffalo hides, along with coyote, beaver and ermine pelts. Rattlesnake skins, an elk skull and prairie dog skulls are also used near the trees.

Entertainment by local performers is also part of the afternoon. Among those scheduled to perform are Pierre Mayor Laurie Gill and her husband Bob, vocal and guitar; Steve Van Mullem and Michelle Humann, violin and piano; and piano soloists Priscilla Hofer, Gloria Merriam and Linda Steele.

There will also be holiday refreshments, living-history demonstrations and great holiday buys in the Heritage Store.

“This is always the biggest one-day event of the year at the Cultural Heritage Center,” said Jay D. Vogt, State Historical Society director. “We hope people will join us and get into the holiday spirit.”

The museum will be open extended hours through the holidays. From Nov. 25 to Dec. 22, the hours will be 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1-4:30 on Sundays. The Cultural Heritage Center is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s days.

The South Dakota Heritage Fund is a private charitable nonprofit that seeks funding to assist the South Dakota State Historical Society in programming and projects to preserve South Dakota's history and heritage for future generations.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.